



MENTOR•HER

HOW TO STAND OUT

PUBLISHED ON

WEEK ONE
14TH-18TH SEPTEMBER

FOR

FREELANCING

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Mentor Her programme. On Week One, we're going to be focusing on how to get your freelancing career off the ground by identifying the thing that makes you stand out from the crowd.

Whatever type of freelancer you are, whether you're pursuing a career in journalism, as an actress or musician, a screen-writer or one of the many other jobs that come under the umbrella of "freelancing"- the most important thing is getting gigs. To get gigs, you need to find out what makes you special. There are a lot of people out there just like you, who want to follow their dream and their passion. When you're trying to pursue a career as a freelancer, you need to be the woman who's unique and memorable, that has a characteristic that nobody else has. So, we need to ask the question:

WHAT WILL MAKE YOU STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD?

When you're running a business, a term you hear quite often is "Unique Selling Point". That's the identifier that customers, competitors and investors use to single businesses out from a crowd and understand what they're offering that **nobody** else is.

As a freelancer, you'll most likely be operating as a sole-trader, so you're a little business all unto yourself. Unlike other businesses, that might have big brands and big names, as a freelancer your personal brand is the most important aspect when you're trying to get a gig.

This is all about **you**.

So, what makes you different? Have a look at the questions below and do some self reflecting. The aim of this week is to identify your uniqueness, a combination of:

YOUR PERSONALITY

YOUR EXPERIENCE

YOUR STYLE

YOUR WORK ETHIC

YOUR U.S.P.

YOUR PERSONALITY

For many freelancing jobs, especially those that are performative, your personality is a pivotal point in impressing your possible employers. For example, a music radio station will want to hire someone who's enthusiastic, interesting and bubbly. A comedy arena will want to hire a comedian who's funny, outgoing and confident. A newspaper, will want to hire a woman who's thoughtful, well-spoken and opinionated. A business will want to hire a graphic designer who listens, is thorough and pays attention to detail. When you identify what personality traits that you have that might be different or unique from your competitors, you can play into them in interviews to secure jobs and present yourself as the ideal candidate. If you don't know what kind of personality traits you have, think about the way your friends might describe you; or how a stranger might describe you after meeting you one evening. Are you approachable, friendly, and full of smiles? Are you confident, mature, thoughtful, opinionated and easy to get along with? Have a think about all the personality traits you have and ways that you can demonstrate these both in a personal setting and in your personal branding online.

YOUR BACKGROUND/EXPERIENCE

One of the most important things when you're trying to get a job as a freelancer is to demonstrate experience. The easiest way to do this is to have lots of excellent reviews and testimonials from your past clients. But, if you're just starting out, or just starting back to being a freelancer after Covid-19, you might not have recent reviews and testimonials to hand. But, all is not lost: your background can be a good indicator of who you are as a freelancer, without the experience you feel you may be lacking. Your background might be something as simple as a childhood experience growing up. Maybe you've received an award or certificate for "Most Likely to be the Next Marian Finucane" in college, or the class clown your entire life. Your past work experience might show a great attention to detail, a lot of much-needed confidence to speak in front of crowds, or a thoughtful approach to your work. If you have a degree or diploma, that might not fit your brand as a freelancer, think about how you can turn it around so it demonstrates something unique about you. You might have an English degree, but you want to be an RTE broadcaster. Maybe your time in college gave you experience in analyzing texts which you can use to get to the heart of a journalistic career. Maybe your Marketing degree might not feel like it fits your new passion as a comedian, but it might have given you the opportunity to understand consumer-buyer behavior and appeal to audiences the same way a big company brand might. The best type of experiences for a freelancer is little stories you've gained across your life. Maybe you have a funny set of stories about backpacking Europe, what feels like a lifetime navigating the world of dating, interesting insights into the world of corporations in your first job out of college, or tales about raising a family. When you draw on your experiences, in the first stages of interviewing for a contract job, and later on in getting more and more exposure, people will laugh, react and sympathize to what you're telling them and they'll remember you above everyone else.

HOW TO STAND OUT

YOUR STYLE/NICHE

Just like your personality and your background, your style is a big factor in making you stand out from the crowd. Your style of work, is similar to your niche: what do you do best?

Of all the bloggers in the world, why is your blog different? Maybe your style is your passionate and emotional process as an actress; a minimalist design technique as a graphic designer or an unusual or intriguing opinion as a journalist. By identifying a certain style in the way you do things, you can use it across your personal brand and become the go-to woman for the job. You'll find more and more jobs this way, when people say: "You know Mary, she's the blogger that loves to go hiking and camping." "We need a bubbly and eccentric character to play this role in our play, Jane would be perfect." You might feel like by choosing a particular style or niche, you're putting yourself in a box. But the truth is, the world of freelancing is huge, and the only way to stand out sometimes is to put yourself in a box. By making yourself the go-to person for the job, you'll get more and more jobs and exposure, so that if you ever want to do something different- like a TV actress deciding to move over to theatre, a travel blogger moving into food, or a radio DJ moving into journalism - you'll be able to do that with the connections that you've made. So, think about the question, drawing from your personality and experience- what kind of niche could you be the expert in? What kind of style speaks buckets about your personal brand? How can you expand on that to capture the attention of more employers looking for the perfect freelancer?

YOUR WORK ETHIC

Lastly, the biggest thing that will make you stand out from the crowd in any job is your work ethic. How you behave when you've been given a job is a big decider on whether people like you, and if they will hire you back again and tell their friends and colleagues about you. Unlike your personality, background and style that's personal and unique to you; there is a globally recognized standard for work ethic that works. Whatever type of freelancer you are, professionalism is always very much appreciated. The easier you make peoples' lives, the more success you'll find for yourself. A few easy identifiers of a good worth ethic is like any other job: always show up on time, always respond to people's emails immediately, be level-headed and easy to get along with, dress smart when you need to and develop good conversational skills. The biggest lesson we've learned from talking to our Mentors on the programme who have grown their freelancing dream into a full-on career is to hustle hard and work your ass off. When you're just starting out, it's useful to remember that when you have a job to do, and people ask you to do a little bit extra, you should probably do it the first few times, to demonstrate you're dedicated to the job. If you're not willing to sacrifice a bit of time and maybe even a bit of money to get ahead, they'll find someone who does. So stay the extra hour after your job is over, take on the extra project, help someone out and show that you're a determined woman who's ready to get ahead in your freelancing career.

NEXT WEEK



MENTOR•HER

MAKING A PLAN

PUBLISHED ON

WEEK TWO

FOR

FREELANCING